

IDEA 0351

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19 JUL 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Chief, DPD

SUBJECT: IDEALIST Missions

REFERENCE: Memorandum for the Record [redacted]
[redacted] DPD/SEC; subject: Trip Report
San Antonio, Texas and Laughlin AFB,
5 - 7 June 1961; dated 15 June 1961

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1. This memorandum contains recommendations for the approval of the Acting Chief, DPD. Such recommendations are contained in paragraph 8.

2. It is generally recognized within DPD that operation of IDEALIST missions from Laughlin AFB, Del Rio, is less than desirable. The time has come when such missions must be considered untenable as a covert action. Operational factors are falling into such a definite pattern that the course of an IDEALIST mission over Cuba could easily be predicted by friendly or unfriendly forces.

3. Operational factors which are contrary to good practice have become formalized.

a. Flight lines over Cuba have been oriented in generally the same direction and over the same target areas.

b. The aircraft arrives over Cuba at approximately the same time of day on successive missions to take advantage of the sun angle/weather combination.

c. The approach to Cuba is always from the same direction.

4. Procedural matters which tend to compromise security are as follows:

a. While the staging team composition is not always identical to the ones before, there are always some repeats. This tends to identify the operation as one of a series through personal contact.

b. At least two people who have been on staging teams were previously stationed at Laughlin AFB [redacted] and are known to many military and local townspeople.

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c. The same support aircraft (U - 3A) arrives at approximately the same time interval before mission take-off each time there is a Cuba mission.

d. The U-2 arrives at Laughlin AFB to spend the same amount of time on the ground each trip. It is also conspicuous because of the different marking when compared to Laughlin U-2's.

e. The same hangar and the same base have been used for Cuba missions.

f. NORAD has suppressed radar identification for each mission supposedly through the same channels.

g. On a local clearance filed at Laughlin AFB the U-2 stays out nine to ten hours without regular reports to ARTC.

h. At approximately the time the U-2 is nearing Cuba, NAS Key West is advised that we will operate in their area. The conversation is guarded and also is restricted to one cleared person [] however, it is a part of the pattern.

i. The list of persons notified by secure means is growing.

- (1) USAF (AFOSD/SA)
- (2) JCS (J - 3, JNC)
- (3) NAS Guantanamo via NSA
- (4) AFCHG - 5
- (5) NFIC

5. Upon examination of the above factors it becomes evident that several of them closely parallel the factors and sequence of events leading up to 1 May 1960. That is, a pattern has been established and repeated; and under the present operational limitations of range, targets, weather, and staging base, can be expected to be repeated again. In event of an incident our position would be difficult to defend.

6. The confirmed presence of swept-wing jet fighter aircraft in Cuba implies that a radar detection capability is either in being or not far off. This does not mean to imply a capability to down a U-2; but it does imply that the Castro government could offer technical proof of ability to detect a U-2 and therefore give the ring of truth to a publicly aired charge of "aggression" or "provocation".

7. If we could operate from a base closer to Cuba then we could approach the island from a different quarter every mission and delay the probability that the Castro forces could present factual information regarding routes and operating bases. This of course assumes that they are still spread thin as regards radar capability and cannot cover the entire island.

3. It is recommended that:

a. IDEALIST missions stage from various bases in Southeast U. S.

b. Laughlin AFB not be used for further stagings of IDEALIST missions.

c. Representatives of DPD, AFMIG-5, and Detachment 6 conduct surveys of several selected Southeast area bases which might be used for future stagings operations.

SIGNED

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Chief, Special Projects Branch, DPD

The recommendations contained in paragraph 3 are approved:

hon. concur
STANLEY W. BEERLI
Colonel USAF
Acting Chief, DPD-DD/P

CONCUR:

STANLEY W. BEERLI
Colonel, USAF
Acting Chief, DPD-DD/P

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DPD/SPB [redacted]
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